

Opening Remarks at House Committee on Education Innovation

December 18, 2013

110 years ago yesterday right here in North Carolina, innovation changed history. Orville and Wilbur Wright opened the skies to controlled powered flight on Dec. 17, 1903, when their plane took off on a 12-second flight along the dunes of North Carolina's coast.

This House Committee has been created in order to help North Carolina continue that legacy. We are at a transformational time in our history. Innovation of every sort has and will continue to change the lives forever. Innovation is found not only in the gadgets and gizmos that our kids and each of us carry with us, but also in the way we approach both the mundane and the challenging parts of our everyday lives.

We are tasked, I believe, with identifying and supporting new pathways to the future for North Carolina's school children; pathways that may result in dramatic changes in how we deliver education in this state. In many ways North Carolina has lead the nation in education innovation for decades. Many of our LEA's, Community Colleges and Universities have already developed and are implementing new initiatives in education innovation.

To ultimately accomplish our goal, North Carolina will need the bold and visionary leadership of our school superintendents & principals and of our Community College & University Presidents as well the commitment of our professional educators on the front lines. It will be great leaders and great educators that will guide us into the future. There is much important work ahead.

Whereas some of us may still struggle with email and cellphones or are often confused and overwhelmed by Facebook and Twitter, our kids are already instinctively doing what we can only dream about. Frankly, the students of today are just wired differently than we are.

Innovation is not only technological, not just laptops, pads and handheld devices. And innovation is not just an education issue, it is a jobs issue, an economic development issue, a civil rights issue; and it is a moral imperative. We can and we must bring the best educational resources to the poorest and most rural of our population; it can help level the playing field for every student. It is the student that must remain upper most in our minds as we attempt to look into the future. It is the student on whom we rest our future. We must not look at what makes it easier or faster or cheaper for us, but what delivers a quality education to inquiring minds. It falls to us to identify and support innovation and disruption in the delivery of education. "What Got Us Here, Won't Get Us There." Learning and innovation go hand in hand. It would be foolhardy to think that what we did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow. Winston Churchill once said to a group of American students, "*The Empires of the Future are the Empires of the Mind.*"

We must, of course, be mindful of the costs of implementing innovative ideas. But we must also be mindful of the cost of NOT implementing innovative ideas. Over the next few months we are to carefully consider ideas already in action and draw upon good practices that can be scaled out across our great state. We will have the opportunity to raise our view, open our eyes and peek into the future of not only what can be done, but what must be accomplished.

Godspeed, a very Merry and Happy Christmas and may we all have a safe and joyous New Year.

D. Craig Horn
Co-Chairman, House Committee on Innovation in Education